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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002003

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: KRG ELECTIONS: SIGNIFICANT TURNOUT, PRELIMINARY
RESULTS EXPECTED LATE THIS WEEK

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2002

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1998

Classified By: Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) A few hours after polls closed in the Kurdistan region on July 25, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced that 78% of the voters participated in the election. Election monitors from the U.S. Mission report some election irregularities, but did not observe any major acts of fraud or intimidation. KRG President Masoud Barzani's Chief of Staff predicted to us that Barzani would receive 72% of the vote for president, and that the Kurdistan Coalition would receive 63-64 seats in the Parliament. We anticipate that IHEC will announce preliminary election results in the coming week, after tally sheets are transported to Baghdad for tabulation. Final election results are not expected before late August. End Summary.

Significant Turnout, Early Projections

[1](#)2. (C) This morning, domestic and international press reports were abuzz with turnout figures and informal projections of winners in the Kurdistan region elections held yesterday. At a late evening press conference on July 25, Chairman Faraj Al-Haydari of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced that turnout across the Kurdistan region was 78%. IHEC also reports that turnout in Erbil was 79%, 85.9% in Dohuk and 74.5% in Sulaimaniyah. Initial concerns about low turnout appear to be unfounded (Ref A). While yesterday's voter turnout is down from a reported average of 87% in the Kurdistan regional elections held in January 2005, most agree this is still a significant level of participation. Citizens voted for both new members of the 111-seat Iraq Kurdistan Parliament and a president of the Kurdistan region.

[1](#)3. (C) This afternoon, Fuad Hussein, KRG President Masoud Barzani's Chief of Staff, predicted to RRToff that Masoud Barzani would receive 72% of the vote for president, and that the Kurdistan Coalition -- composed of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) -- would receive 63-64 seats in the Parliament. Hussein estimated that 21-22 seats would go to Nawshirwan Mustafa's Change List party, and 11-12 seats would go to the Service and Reform List. Hussein predicted that the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) would win one seat.

Tally Sheets En Route to Baghdad

[1](#)4. (C) Today, IHEC officials are in the process of

transporting the tally sheets from each of the roughly 1,150 polling centers in the Kurdistan region to Baghdad. IHEC reports that tally sheets from Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniyah provinces will be transported directly to the Baghdad Data Entry Center via three separate convoys. At the same time, IHEC officials are tallying ballots submitted during Special Needs Voting on July 23 at special Count Centers in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniyah (Ref B). Election monitors from the U.S. Mission observed this effort at each of the three count centers today. In Erbil, Poloff reported that the Count Center manager followed the U.S. team closely. The U.S. team expressed concern to the Count Center manager that the triplicate carbon copy forms were not being used in Erbil, but instead that IHEC officials were marking tally results on three individual photocopied sheets, which created a risk for increased errors.

15. (C) A USAID contractor, the International Federation of Electoral Systems (IFES), has notified us that some Kurdish commissioners at the IHEC are being pressured by the KDP and PUK parties to change the location for vote tabulation from Baghdad to Erbil. The Kurdistan Regional Electoral Office (KREO), the regional office of IHEC located in Erbil, has received this pressure before. However, IFES and other technical assistance providers agree that the Data Entry Center at IHEC headquarters in Baghdad is the only facility that is prepared for the vote tabulation event. If consulted on this matter, IFES will advise the IHEC Board of Commissioners to stay with the original plan to tabulate the Kurdistan region election results in Baghdad.

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Final Results Expected in Late August

16. (C) Election monitors from the U.S. Mission will continue to observe progress at the IHEC Data Entry Center each day until the vote tabulation is complete. Over the coming days the votes will be tallied, and IHEC is expected to announce provisional results later this week. IHEC will not announce final results until it has been able to complete its formal review of all complaints submitted by voters and political organizations (Note: domestic and international election observers may not file formal complaints with IHEC. End Note.) Complaints will be subject to an administrative review, and serious complaints may be appealed for a judicial review. Final election results are not expected before late August.
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